FROM: P.O. Box 9007
Berkeley, CA 94709 USA

BERKELEY OCT 10 P M 1971

First Class

To:

Express Ads

RAILROADIANA: Steam and Electric Public timetables, No. ShoreLine Annual Reports from 1917 to 1948, traction timetable reproductions. Send 20¢ for all listings. Herb Danneman, 14425 Woodland Pl., Brookfield WI 53005.

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RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

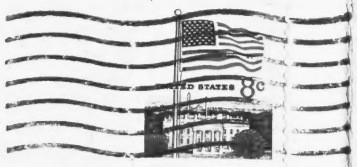
Vol. 1 No. 21
October 4, 1971

Flying Scotsman

FROM: P.O. Box 9007
Berkeley, CA 94709 USA

First Class

To:



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RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 21
October 4, 1971

Flying Scotsman

ON THE COVER: The FLYING SCOTSMAN touches San Francisco soil. Photo by Message Media. See article elsewhere in this issue.

LETTERS

Regarding the news item in RTN no. 20 whereby Amtrak is christening the Seattle-San Diego train the STARLIGHT, a more appropriate name for this train is the WEST COASTER. The STARLIGHT denotes an overnight train and everyone knows that service along this route is in the daytime. The WEST COASTER would also revive the name of an old-time SP train that ran from Portland to Los Angeles via the San Joaquin Valley. I am afraid that Amtrak missed the bus in this matter.

The fact that the southbd train will run a half-hour earlier is indeed amusing, considering that this train is late most of the time. Example: on Aug. 29 I was at the Salinas SP depot to pick up a relative arriving from Oakland. The CASCADE, due at 11:48, did not arrive until 1:28pm. How Amtrak hopes to keep this train on the advertised by an earlier departure from the Northwest is beyond my comprehension. But I do wish the corporation and this train the best of luck.

Elmer Lagorio

Carmel, Calif.

Enclosed is a $4.00 check for a one-year gift subscription to Rail Travel Newsletter...

Keep up the good work. Yours is the best of its kind. The Paul Rayton articles are priceless. I have told many about your newsletter.

J. Gary Dillen

Akron, Ohio

... Shortly after the train (COAST DAYLIGHT) pulled out, about 8 minutes late, I decided to walk forward to see the train. I encountered the conductor in the next car. "What seat are you in? Go back to your seat!" he snapped. I went back, got the seat number, and went forward again. He was in the same car now. "Go back to your seat. Where are you going?" I said I was walking forward. "Why do you want to walk forward?" he snarled. I trotted back to my seat. He soon picked up my ticket. I asked, politely, what the delay was leaving Los Angeles. "Why do you want to know?" was his answer. There is a man who deserves the Rusty Spike Award. (I should have said "Shazam! I'm Captain Amtrack!")...

Name Withheld

San Francisco, Calif.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 1, No 21, October 4, 1971. Published twice monthly, on the 1st & 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. $4 a year, 25¢ a copy. Editor: James Russell. Artist: Michael Cohen.

AMTRAK ANTICIPATES A HUGE DEFICIT

In a report disturbing to rail users, the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 4) stated that Amtrak is preparing to ask Congress for an emergency appropriation of more funds to keep it operating. The paper quoted an anonymous railroad executive as saying that a daily 300-mile run his road makes for Amtrak costs $11 a mile to operate while revenues of only 60¢ a mile have been coming in, on the average. He complained that while there were only passengers enough for one or two cars, Amtrak "insists on six or seven cars every day."

The example was to point up the fact that operating costs are much greater than Amtrak had anticipated. $160 million will likely be the amount requested of Congress. But, said the Journal, a political furor is expected, since Amtrak had assured Congress initially that the $40 million plus $100 million in guaranteed loans that Amtrak started with would be enough to hold it until it reached the break-even point, expected in about two years. Amtrak's current projections are for a loss of $150 million a year. Amtrak's President, Roger Lewis, reportedly wants to use the initial capital for capital improvements such as new equipment, and ask Congress to allot money to cover operating deficits.

NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell reacted negatively to the news (see Quotes, p. 12), again criticizing Amtrak's mode of operation—letting the railroads run the trains and then attempting to foot the bill without direct control over the train operators. He criticized the lack of a consumer voice on Amtrak's board of directors and the corporation's silence concerning details of its operations (it has not yet filed a detailed report the ICC has requested). Said Haswell: "We have evidence that on-time performance of a lot of trains is lousy—no better than before and in some cases worse—but Amtrak won't even release information on that subject."

Amtrak is now talking with the DOT about money matters. It is possible that the amount requested of Congress may run as high as $300 million, to cover all operating losses for the first two years.

But to rail users, perhaps the most discouraging comment of all came from Henry F. Davenport, vice president for passenger services with the Illinois Central: "In many respects it can be regarded as a laboratory in which we are testing the need for rail passenger service. Say we do spend $500 million or $600 million on it in the next few years and then decide to scrap it. So what? It will have been worth it to settle the question once and for all."

AMTRAK SCHEDULE DELAYED -- NEW TRAIN NAMES, NUMBERS APPEAR

As we reported in issue 19, Amtrak is renumbering the trains in its nationwide system. Also, many of them will be renamed in the third forthcoming schedule. The effective date of the timetable has been moved to Nov. 14 instead of Oct. 31. For the first time, the Official Guide printers will not print the schedules. The job went to an Atlanta firm. (The Official Guide still sets type by hand.)

We list below the new names and numbers of most of the trains as they are expected to appear in the third timetable:

NEW NO.	NEW NAME	NAME IN PREVIOUS SCHEDULE
1-2	Sunset Limited	Sunset
3-4	Super Chief	Super Chief/El Capitan
5-6	City of San Francisco	none
5-6	Denver Zephyr (on days City of S.F. does not run)	Denver Zephyr
7-8	Empire Builder	Empire Builder
9-10	North Coast Hiawatha	none (North Coast Limited)
9-10	Hiawatha (Chic.-Minneapolis 4 days a week)	none
11-12, 13-14	Coast Starlight	none (Cascade)
12-13	Coast Daylight (4 days/week)	none (Coast Daylight)
15-16	Texas Chief	Texas Chief
30-31	National Limited	Spirit of St. Louis
40-41	Broadway Limited	Broadway Limited
42-43	Keystone	Duquesne
50	Fast Flying Virginian (eastbd Chic.-Boston; extended service. Formerly James Whitcomb Riley & George Washington)	
51	James Whitcomb Riley (westbd Boston-Chic; extended service. Formerly George Washington & James Whitcomb Riley)	
52-53	South Wind (temporary name)	South Wind
54-55	City of New Orleans	City of New Orleans
60-61	Lake Shore	none (PC 68-69)
70-73	Mohawk	(Empire Service)
72-71	Niagara	" "
74-77	(to be named later)	" "
76-75	Seneca	" "
81-82	Silver Star	Silver Star
83-84	Silver Meteor	Silver Meteor
85-86	Silver Champion	Champion
87-88	Florida Special (eff. 12/17)	none
91-92	Silver Star (Auburndale-Miami connection)	
93-94	South Wind (Jacksonville-Miami connection)	
98	Fast Flying Virginian (Charlottesville-Newport News conn.)	
99	James Whitcomb Riley (Newport News-Charlottesville conn.)	
120-123	Morning Executive (Metroliner, express Wash-NY & New Haven-Wash.)	
124-125	Afternoon Executive (Metroliner, express Wash-New Haven & NY-Wash)	
131	Congressional (New York-Washington)	
132	Free State (Washington-New York)	
140	Fairfield (New York-New Haven)	
141-144	Connecticut Yankee (Washington-Springfield)	
142-143	Charter Oak (Springfield-New York)	
145	Bay State (Boston-Washington via Springfield)	
147	Free State (New Haven-Washington)	
150-151	Yankee Clipper (TurboTrain)	
160-161	East Wind (New York-Boston)	
162-163	Narragansett (New York-Boston)	
165	Patriot (Boston-New York)	
170	Bay State (Washington-Boston via Springfield)	
171-172	Southern Crescent (Washington-Boston)	
173-174	Colonial (Washington-Boston)	
175-178	Senator (Washington-Boston)	
176	Patriot (Washington-New Haven)	
180	Bunker Hill (Philadelphia-Boston)	
181	Valley Forge (Boston-Philadelphia)	
182-183	Merchants Limited (Boston-Philadelphia)	
301-304	Prairie State	The Limited
302-303	Abraham Lincoln	Abraham Lincoln
320-321, 322-323, 324-325, 326-327	"Hiawatha Service", Chicago-Milwaukee. 326-7 is added train.	
360-361	Wolverine	none (PC 14-17, Chic-Detroit)
362-363	St. Clair	none (PC 356-355, " ")
390-391	Shawnee	Shawnee
640-641	West Virginian	West Virginian (B&O 8-5)
642-643	West Virginian	West Virginian (B&O 12-11)
775-776	San Diegan	San Diegan (ATSF 75-76)
777-778	San Diegan	San Diegan (ATSF 77-78)
195-196	(to be named later)	BN 195-196, Seattle-Portland
198-199	(to be named later)	BN 198-199, Seattle-Portland

Besides the trains listed above, there will be 12 daily round trips of Metroliners New York-Washington, numbered 100-119. There will be clocker service, as we reported earlier, New York-Washington on the hour between 7am and 8pm, including the Metroliner runs.

The entire Northeast Corridor service is being revamped, and some of the train names in the table do not correspond to presently scheduled trains, so the previous name has been omitted.

It's obvious that the new Amtrak schedule is going to be the most thoroughly-studied one yet. Train watchers will need some time to digest all the changes. Consist changes will also be shown, adding to the complexity of the revamping.

FLYING SCOTSMAN REACHES SAN FRANCISCO

The famous steam train, owned by British businessman Alan Pegler, pulled up alongside the boarded-up Western Pacific station in Oakland at 5:30pm Sept. 27, 2 hours late on its run from Oroville behind a slow freight. A good crowd was on hand to greet the big green engine. The media covered the event well.

Two days later at 5pm in San Francisco, the WP barge LAS PLUMAS (Spanish for "feathers", as in Feather River) dramatically nudged against pier 43 near Fisherman's Wharf, bearing the train split into 2 sections. Only a few railfans saw this sight, the media ignoring it. But it was a far more engaging event to some than the Oakland arrival. In less than an hour, the engine was towed off the barge (see cover) and the Londonesque day ended with the season's first downpour.

ON-TIME PERFORMANCE OF THE CASCADE

One of the hottest topics among West Coast train watchers is the tardiness of Amtrak train 11-98-80 (northbd 79-99-12), the tri-weekly CASCADE. RTN gathered data about its arrival times southbd at Los Angeles over a 36-day period (Aug. 29-Oct. 3). The times include those of the COAST DAYLIGHT. For comparison, we examined the westbd arrival times of the SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN. Here are the results:

	Coast Train	Super Chief
on time	11	33
0'15" late	5	1
0'30" late	8	2
0'45" late	1	
1'00" late	3	
1'15" late	1	
1'30" late		
1'45" late		
2'00" late	1	
2'15" late	1	
2'30" late	2	
greater*	3	

*3:05, 3:10, 4:25 once each.

These figures speak for themselves. "On time" was defined as no more than 5 mins late. For most "on time" arrivals, the SUPER CHIEF was 5-10 mins early. Thus the coast trains were on time 30% of the time, the SUPER CHIEF 92%. Of the 11 on-time Coast arrivals, only 1 was for the CASCADE (Oct. 1). The latest arrival time for the DAYLIGHT was 1 hr 10 mins. It is virtually impossible to connect with the SUPER CHIEF from the Coast trains, since there is a 10-min connection, and the CHIEF no longer waits more than about 10 extra minutes.

NEW SCHEDULES OF WESTERN TRAINS

Listed below are the new schedules effective Nov. 14 for trains on SP lines. No changes for the SUNSET LIMITED.

Train 5 (CITY OF SF) lv Ogden 11pm (MT), ar Oakland 3:15pm, ar San Francisco 3:45pm (PT).

Train 6 (CITY OF SF) lv San Francisco 8:30am, lv Oakland 9:00am, ar Ogden 3:00am (MT).

Train 11 (COAST STARLIGHT) lv Portland 3:45pm, ar Oakland 8:05am (at Oakland it becomes train 12).

Train 12 (COAST STARLIGHT tri-weekly, or COAST DAYLIGHT) lv S.F. 8:05am, lv Oakland 8:35am, ar Los Angeles 6:45pm.

Train 13 (COAST STARLIGHT tri-weekly, or COAST DAYLIGHT) lv L.A. 10:15am, ar Oakland 8:40pm, ar S.F. 9:10pm. Tri-weekly it becomes train 14 at Oakland.

Train 14 (COAST STARLIGHT) lv S.F. 8:40pm, lv Oakland 9:10pm, ar Portland 1:30pm.

Daily thru service between San Francisco and San Diego will be inaugurated, leaving San Diego tentatively at 7am.

AUTO-TRAIN PREPARES TO HIGHBALL

The Auto-Train Corporation, at 8pm on Dec. 6, will begin rolling its first car-carrying passenger train out of Alexandria, Virginia, toward Sanford, Florida, 37 miles from Disney World. The new Disney fantasy land opened Oct. 1. A full-page ad in the N.Y. Times Oct. 4 announced details of the unique run.

Auto-Train has purchased 10 bi-level dome passenger cars from Santa Fe, 7 Zephyr dome coaches from Western Pacific (see RTN no. 20), and about 6 sleepers from Union Pacific. Along with other equipment, including enclosed auto carriers, the cars will make a non-stop run, arriving in Florida at 11am. The train leaves from Auto-Train's own new terminal 15 miles south of Washington D.C., adjoining Interstate highway 95. It arrives at another new Auto-Train terminal in Sanford. Besides its proximity to Disney World, Sanford is within a short driving distance of Daytona Beach, the Tampa-St. Petersburg area, and the Ft. Lauderdale-Miami area.

The passenger cars are being thoroughly renovated and redecorated for the run. Auto-Train President Eugene Garfield says they are "being modified to conform with our objective of bringing a new environmental approach to passenger rail service." The corporation boasts that the reclining seats have more leg room than a car or plane—"even a 747."

Use of the sleepers costs $40 extra for a double bedroom, including room service, TV in your room, and "some other nice things." The basic one-way fare is $190 for any car with up to 4 people. If a car can legally hold more than 4, the rest pay $15 apiece.

Auto-Train promises that movies will be shown for kids as the train gets underway, while adults have cocktails and complimentary hors d'oeuvres the first hour. At 9pm a complimentary "sit-down buffet" with "everything from lobster to Beef Wellington to a great selection of French pastries" is served. The kids will have had hot dogs and other snacks with their movie.

Next come two movies, followed by coffee and a free snack. For adults, a "glass-domed starlite lounge" will be open from 9pm to 3am. There's also a night club car with entertainment, and a more intimate downstairs lounge.

Starting at 7:30am free continental breakfasts are served. With advance notice, the train will provide special dietary requirements.

Each train will carry an "adults-only" car. A stewardess will be on duty in each car, and in the event of a medical emergency, the train will stop at the next "major city" where a physician will be on call.

Twelve enclosed bi-level auto carriers will be on each of the trains (Auto-Train will have 2 sets of trains initially), with a planned capacity of 90 to 104 cars. The passenger cars seat 350. Car loading operations and terminal layouts are innovative, according to Auto-Train. A car can be loaded on in less than one minute. First car on is the first one off. The corporation requires that cars be ready to load an hour before departure. An Auto-Train man drives each car—fully insured while in transit—into the carriers. Any towed vehicle, such as a U-haul trailer, will be accepted with a car at the cost of a second full fare. Once loaded, passengers have no access to their autos.

Auto-Train entered into a 15-year contract with SCL and RF&P to use their lines. The railroads receive operating expenses plus 20% and a share in profits. The corporation plans to expand operations in the future to other routes. Evidently the public sees a good future for them, as 700,000 shares of their stock at $10 per share sold out in 1½ hours last July 15.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

A LOS ANGELES-Salt Lake City run is in the offing, Amtrak says--hopefully by Jan. 15. It might also restore coast-to-coast sleepers between N.Y. & either L.A. or S.F. via Chicago next summer. A Nevada Representative earlier asked Amtrak to run a "fun train" from L.A. to Las Vegas... SILVER CHAMPION, formerly CHAMPION, is rumored to run soon between Boston and Florida... THE DOT may spend $460 million to improve Northeast Corridor service (New Hampshire to Virginia) in the near future. Inter-city trains might run as often as every half hour. At the same time, the DOT announced the release of $1.145 billion for a 3-month period for highways ... CANADIAN NATIONAL increased passenger fares by 10-15% October 1... AMTRAK'S PUBLICITY campaign is doing just fine. A 2nd-grader in the Berkeley schools brought his Amtrak button to "show and tell", and not one of his 25 classmates knew what Amtrak was. However his teacher came to the rescue and declared it a new airline!... WE ASKED rhetorically last time how BN can run an hour late Seattle-Portland. An answer comes from Bill Anderson: "for the past 6 yrs this line has been the scene of delays and slow orders on an almost unending basis. During the 1st 4 mos of 1968 train 408 reached Portland within 5 mins of its scheduled time less than 5% of the time. The installation of welded rail and CTC caused some, but by no means all, of the problem..." THE SHAWNEE has been running (besides IC cars) L&N coaches and a NP Holiday lounge (parlor-lounge) off the Seattle to Portland trains... PASSENGER COUNTS for your edification: westbd SUPER CHIEF/EL CAP out of Albuquerque 9/18--80 slpr, 155 coach; northbd CASCADE out of L.A. 9/19--25 slpr, 135 coach; northbd out of Oakland 9/22--25 slpr, 75 coach; EMPIRE BUILDER eastbd out of Yakima 9/28--34 slpr, 53 coach...

FAMILY TAKING train for 1st time Sept. 19 had flown S.F. to San Diego, noticed train from their hotel, didn't know it ran to S.F., so called Santa Fe for info, cashed in airline tickets and rode train back to S.F.... RAILFAN REMARKED to SP trainman on CASCADE about the frequent crew changes (San Jose, Oakland, Davis...), and his reply: "Oh, the railroad doesn't have to pay for this." Amtrak, get your own people!... RECENT RAIL tour of perimeter of U.S. prompted comment from rail traveler that EMPIRE BUILDER had the best diner... EXCURSION PLANNERS still battling railroads. Latest stumbling block: BN refuses to haul heavy-weight private cars. Presumably edict doesn't include its own office cars. Meanwhile Amtrak continues to lose excursion profits... FLORIDA SPECIAL will run. SOUTH WIND will change to evening departure from Chicago, making better connection to Florida for travelers in Midwest...

KEEPING TRACK

...with Paul Rayton

(A regular RTN feature. Each issue presents another review-critique of a selected pre-Amtrak train.)

SOUTHERN CRESCENT (Part I)

Date: December 30, 1970

We had a hard time getting on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, largely because the ticket agents in Philadelphia were so incompetent. I couldn't get one shred of information from them about ticketing--they had apparently not heard of the through car to Los Angeles via New Orleans, and my questions were too technical for them to handle.

It was quite simple, really. We had Bedroom E in car SW-2 reserved from New Orleans to Los Angeles. As an afterthought, we decided to ride this all the way from Philadelphia, taking advantage of the night in New Orleans. So we wanted to get Bedroom E for the rest of the distance, to avoid changing rooms.

First the ticket agent told me I had to go through Chicago, then at my insistence on getting on the SOUTHERN CRESCENT said that it was "sold out." Finally an alternative was proposed: we would buy coach tickets to Washington and sit in the raggedy old Penn Central coaches that far, when we would --possibly--be able to get space. We did just that, and found plenty of seat space in Washington. In fact, there was one coach that had two people as its entire load. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

We arrived at the 30th St. Station in Philadelphia about 45 minutes before the scheduled departure of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT. Suddenly I noticed an announcement that the CRESCENT would arrive at 5:15pm, 35 minutes late. Only 90 miles out from point of origin and half an hour late already! We coped for the interim, hovering inside some doors near the track entrance, anxious eyes peering down the tracks now and then in search of our long lost train.

When it finally pulled in, I spotted the red border of the SP car and we headed for that, that being where we really wanted to ride. I explained the situation to the Porter and Conductor. We were given tentative clearance to sit in SW-1, Bedroom E while we waited to see if that space had been sold.

While we'd waited for the CRESCENT to show up, the southbound SCL CHAMPION had come and gone--on time. I had watched it wistfully, thinking to myself that there was a real train. People had been sitting in the dining car, and I could almost taste the club sandwiches they were eating. How I wished I was getting on that instead of this train. Alas, no time for sighs. Into the car and off we go.

Meeting and boarding an SP sleeper (a 10/6) in Philadelphia on that cold December day was kind of exciting, like meeting an old friend in some exotic foreign country... Oh no! This car has no heat! Our bedroom mirror has frost on it! What's wrong, I ask the Porter. He didn't know, other than that it was cold all through these Southern Railway cars at the end of the train.

It was fun for awhile, sitting there all bundled up, looking out the windows at frozen cityscapes rushing by. The track was smooth (maintained for Metroliners, no doubt) and we whipped right along. Downright impressive--if only it would last. If only it wasn't so cold!

We coped with the cold, had another discussion about our tickets with a Trainman, and finally, rats that we were, deserted our frozen bedroom and started making a seemingly endless trek forward, searching for a car with heat.

The eternal optimist in us was rewarded. The two coaches--Penn Central yet--at the extreme front end had heat (Hurrah!), so we sat down in an aged PRR coach and mumbled various unprintables about no heat and the blood-curdling coffee PC served. Odd that an allegedly "prestige" train would be so cold, and the much despised PC cars up front had what heat there was to be found.

In Washington D.C. we had a 35-minute stop, according to the timetable. I assumed they would expedite things to try to get back on time, but no, we used the full 35 minutes while through cars from New York were joined with other cars originating there in D.C.

Here we had to change cars. Still waiting for definite word on the bedroom, we settled into seats 51 and 52 of car N14.

Not only did the "new" cars have heat, here in Washington the train finally got a real dining car, and with the hour now being about 7:30pm, we were right hungry. From our coach seats we—and the rest of the train—all had to weave back through three sleeping cars to reach the diner. I pitied the poor folks who were sitting three or four coaches forward—they would have some seven cars to negotiate to get to the diner.

After a lengthy, and crowded, wait in line in the passageway adjacent to the kitchen, we were finally seated by a rather crusty and quite proper Steward. He was the quintessence of my preconception of a Southern Gentleman. He presented the menu with a flourish.

The Southern Railway dining cars were quite complete, both in place setting and edible fare. The complete dinner prices then spanned a range from $3.00 (for Omelet with Tomatoes) to $4.75 (for Prime Rib of Beef, Natural). Between those there was also Broiled Fish, lemon butter ($3.30); Roast Young Turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce ($3.60); or Country Ham Steak, natural gravy ($4.15). All the dinners included appetizer, two of the four listed vegatables, salad, dessert and beverage.

I opted for the Prime Rib, to be preceded by the hot consommé. The consommé was hot and fairly good. The Prime Rib was slightly tough, though cooked as requested. If it was "Natural," as per the menu, that steer must have been raised in a desert (I chuckled to myself), so lacking were the vital natural juices. My wife had chosen the Omelet, which was fluffy and light. She said it was "outstanding," and it was a most exciting and colorful entree.

The vegetables were served correctly, in side dishes, and were passable. I think the peas were canned. If they aren't using fresh vegetables the least they could do would be to use frozen brands. Other varieties available were green beans, Harvard beets (good!), and "flaked" potatoes.

The salad was a lettuce, pineapple and cottage cheese affair served with French dressing. The salad was all right but the dressing was only average. Dessert choices were practically nonexistent, being apple pie, or ice cream, or a half grapefruit. The pie was somewhat above average, but with doughy crust.

When I criticize food or its preparation and/or presentation, I am judging by the severest of standards. I know that a dining car is capable of serving—and I expect it to serve—dishes that would please the most finicky of palates. If I say that something is weak, or tough, or tasteless, I don't mean to say that it is to be dismissed on the spot as just "another American train with lousy food." If the food is <u>that</u> bad, I'll say so right away. In this instance, while I have my differences with the chefs, etc., I'd still have to rate this dining car as one of the better diners in the country, especially considering the prevailing prices.

After dinner we sat and sipped coffee (Peggy) and tea (me). The coffee was served in an individual silver pot, and the tea in a china teapot, as it should be.

When it became obvious that the crew wanted to clean up, we left and headed back to find the Conductor. We were given good news: if our desired bedroom was not taken upon departure from Lynchburg (Va.), it would be ours. It wasn't, so about midnight we effected our move from coach to sleeper.

After the usual settling-in rituals, complicated by the various movements of the train, we retired. Unfortunately, the Southern Railway roadbed, for all their "innovations" talk, is not very good. I'd have to grade it "C-" and sleep was, at best, difficult.

Came the dawn. When I was finally able to correlate a station with my timetable, I discovered that in spite of our apparent great speed during the night we were now five additional minutes late. I was thankful we hadn't gone any faster, though, or I might have slept on the floor-involuntarily.

We had breakfast before arriving in Atlanta. The breakfasts were again reasonably priced, the "works" for from $1.50 (two eggs) to $2.10 (Broiled Sugar Cured Bacon with Eggs). The breakfast was ample, quite good, and well served. Some remarkably good grits were included, smooth and warm.

Arrival in Atlanta was at 9:35am, just 40 minutes late. We lost more time there playing "musical cars", so got out 45 minutes late. But we had gained a dome car!

The weather was not particularly inviting this day. Cold, snowy drizzle oozed down the windows of the Pullman-Standard (flat window) dome car. About an hour out of Atlanta the precipitation stopped and viewing improved. The leaden sky cast a somber spell over bleak winter landscapes. The brightest color was the reddish earth peeking out now and then. The rain-drenched trees were dark brown skeletons.

We rode along, with the roadbed seemingly a bit smoother than that of the previous nighttime. I walked through the train, looking at the passengers. We had let off a lot of people in Atlanta, but had picked up nearly as many replacements. Of course, with the holidays (and tri-weekly operation) you would expect a heavy load. We had some 5 coaches and 8 sleeping cars in the consist. At the end of the train four of these sleepers were completely unoccupied. At first I thought them to be deadheading. Then I found an attendant who told me that these were for several private groups being picked up in Birmingham, Alabama.

One of the most distinctive items found aboard the SOUTHERN CRESCENT is the "publicity packet" awaiting every passenger in the sleeping cars. It starts out with an ingenuous "welcome aboard" to you from the President of the Southern Railway himself, and contains various booklets, papers, a timetable, and even a "Junior Railroader" badge for the kids—all to get you ready for a pleasant trip. It is a very stunning and inviting presentation, especially if you're used to getting a room plain.

It was soon time for lunch. Four complete selections were listed on the luncheon menu, ranging from $2.85 to $3.30. The offerings were generically identical to the dinner menu: Broiled or Fried Fish, tartar sauce; Chicken Pan Pie, family style; Baked Sugar Cured Ham, raisin sauce; and Cheese or Ham Omelet (3 eggs). These same items were available on an a la carte basis for $2.20. We tried the ham and the fish, both of which were good in their own average sort of way.

The most unusual part of this meal was the vegetable—garden spinach. It must have been made from fresh spinach, right out of the fields, for I have never in all my days tasted spinach like this. Strong! is only half the story, for it certainly hadn't been worked over and denatured by any preserving process. Adding lemon did not help, and I finally had to abandon its bitterness as too sharp for me.

The salad was Head Lettuce, with French dressing. I didn't think the lettuce was so great—it seemed a little wilted. For dessert we had Blueberry Cheese Cake which was light and cheesy. We were not rushed away from the table after lunch, so we took time to relax, sip our coffee and ice tea and take in the everchanging panorama outside. We had progressed enough now that we were seeing infrequent patches of clear blue sky and the lighting effects were exciting.

A word about the dining car. The utensils were real <u>silver</u> ware, and the china service was obviously custom-designed. I noticed that there was a consistent pattern, sort of—all the plates and saucers had a dual blue-green border around the edge, with a narrow brown circle farther inside the plate. Some of the plates were rather ashen-colored whereas the majority of them were of white china.

I examined the undersides of several of the white patterns, but found no identification. Turning over one of the ashen saucers, there was what I sought: "Southern Railway 1955." Some of the real stuff! The other, white china must have been a replacement order which had not been specifically identified.

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In the next issue Paul Rayton concludes the SOUTHERN CRESCENT article, and the following issue continues his coast-to-coast thru sleeper trip on the SUNSET.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"It's going to hit the Hill like a ton of bricks. Sparks will fly. We're not going to stand by while they bleed more money out of Congress and the taxpayers just to throw down their rat hole. They'll continue to lose enormous sums as long as they use this abominable contract system under which the railroads keep operating the trains for them."

—Anthony Haswell, quoted in Wall Street Journal Oct. 4 concerning Amtrak's need for more money

"Transportation politics is fine-print and hidden-pressure stuff; the real stakes are concealed in the coded pronouncements of regulatory agencies and secret options on land around new highway routes."

—Christopher Lydon reviewing transportation books in N.Y. Times Book Review Sept. 26

"As a mode of transporting people and goods, the iron wheel and a rail still make a combination hard to beat."

—Walter J. Hickel in Saturday Review Oct. 2

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

Here on the BART Oakland Subway Dedication

BART has gone to great lengths to insure safety of subway users. At the 19th & Broadway station, for example, is a bullet-proof glass information booth. To use a restroom, a patron speaks to the booth attendant who presses one of two buttons labelled "Men" and "Women". One of two doors in a nearby wall opens electronically and lights go on inside. Only one party at a time may enter, under control of the attendant. We'd planned to have a picture section on the dedication in this issue, but space did not permit. We'll try again shortly.

New York Gets First of New Subway Cars

Early this month four cars from St. Louis Car Co. arrived in New York for testing on the IND, BMT and Staten Island Rapid Transit Systems. A total of 352 have been ordered. Two Democratic City Council members who had not been invited to the press showing criticized the cars, calling the preview a "road show" to help put over the upcoming $2.5 billion transportation bond issue. A spokesman for William Ronan denied the allegation.

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RTN's normal mailing schedule is 1 week after date of issue. Our news lag, you will note, is only a day or two before date of mailing. The next issue (Oct. 18) will be late. It will be mailed about Oct. 30. This is because the editor is taking an extended trip on Amtrak this month.

EDITORIAL

After a summer of Amtrak operation, what can be said about American train service and its chances for survival?

We have been told that Amtrak is losing money—much more money than forecast. Does this come as any surprise to train watchers? The railroads for many years said they were losing money on passenger trains. Some of their figures were known to be exaggerated, but clearly only in isolated instances was there any longer a profit to be had under the old ways of doing business.

So did we need Amtrak to step in merely to confirm that the old ways are no longer profitable? We needed Amtrak to take over the passenger system and run it on a more modern basis, and especially with more concern for the consumer—the rail traveler. That most of those consumers had been lost to other modes of transport is a fact of life, and another enormous job facing Amtrak was--and is—to again build up a market for rail travel. We have no other alternative than to rebuild our rail travel network. How many times have you heard the remark that if we didn't have rail technology we'd have to invent it?

But can any meaningful generalizations be made from the experience of one summer of Amtrak? Can we conclude that people are taking back to the rails now that the trains are "worth traveling again?" Can we conclude that there is no real market for train travel since the nation seems to function adequately with many fewer trains than it had even a year ago?

Of course it's impossible to answer these questions yet, since there has yet been no adequate test made of American public response to a suitable nationwide system. Amtrak has been operating only as a holding operation, and we've yet to see the day when an efficient, reliable, pleasant, properly advertised passenger train system is given a test.

As a grassroots example of the current relationship between trains and the public, let's consider our most visible local route—the Coast route over which a tri-weekly train runs between Seattle and San Diego and over which a San Francisco-Los Angeles train operates the other four days of the week.

The 4-day-a-week COAST DAYLIGHT was the only train SP never attempted to discontinue (at least within memory). It had many advantages, not the least of which was an extraordinarily scenic route. All summer long and during the Christmas season SP always ran an excellent dome car on this train. That alone made the trip worthwhile, though the presence of the horrendous automat food cars—often without even microwave ovens to heat the stale, preservative-laden gook the expensive machines spewed forth—made the trip depressing at the least. There were other depressing elements. The low pre-Amtrak morale of many crew members, the removal of every small nicety that can make or break a trip—passengers endured these things but not surprisingly gradually trickled away.

What happened when Amtrak took over? Well, the dome car went and the automat stayed. A lounge was added after awhile when a local railfan telegraphed Amtrak. A bit later the lounge got an attendant. The route was changed to run from Oakland instead of San Francisco, which may or may not have affected patronage.

So all in all the train has been downgraded, and most importantly no advertising has appeared (except for two rather blah newspaper announcements). We'd wager that not one person in a hundred in California knows that a train runs between the two metropolitan areas.

Can one draw any conclusions from ridership of the train, given these circumstances? Certainly none regarding the potential for train travel on the West Coast. Even railfans find the trip dull, when it could be a most exciting event given proper handling and merchandising.

Then consider that there have been rail strikes and pending rail strikes for a goodly portion of the time since the Amtrak takeover. One can only conclude that no adequate test of rail travel potential has been made in this area.

Conclusion: Amtrak needs more money to do an adequate job. Throwing money down the drain of old-fashioned train operations is not an adequate job.